



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF



50X1

20 FEBRUARY 1965

~~TOP SECRET~~

DAILY BRIEF
20 FEBRUARY 1965

1. South Vietnam

Coup leader Colonel Thao is reported under arrest and others involved have been ordered to give themselves up.

While the coup has failed, General Khanh's status still seems up in the air. Air Force Chief Ky has told the press that Khanh is still armed forces commander but that "in the future we will talk about it."

50X1

There have been no reports of significant Viet Cong military moves to exploit South Vietnamese military disarray during the coup effort. An analysis of recent trends in the fighting is at Annex.

There have been no indications of recent major deployments of Chinese Communist or North Vietnamese forces.

2. Israel

There have been several incidents in the past few days on the always touchy Israeli-Syrian border. Local UN peace-keeping officials move as fast as they can to hold these incidents down, but the Syrians in particular may be nervous.

reports of Israeli troop call-ups and concentrations. There is so far no good evidence to support this Arab concern, however.

50X1

50X1

3. Venezuela

There is no information available to suggest that yesterday's killing of a US Peace Corps Volunteer in Caracas by Venezuelan police was other than a tragic case of mistaken identity. Police had been alerted to cope with student riots supporting a taxi strike and the police involved had earlier been attacked.

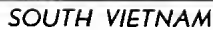
4. USSR

Premier Kosygin is apparently going to Leipzig in East Germany during the first week of March. The annual trade fair opens there next weekend. The East Germans so far are not giving this much public notice. Ulbricht, off on his trip to Cairo, will not be on hand to greet Kosygin.

50X1

5. USSR





ANNEX

The Military Situation
in South Vietnam

The past six weeks have been among the most costly thus far in the civil war for both sides. During January, government losses ran to over 900 killed. Over 2,200 Viet Cong were killed. These were among the highest monthly figures on record. The trend toward high casualties has continued this month. During the very active week of February 7-13, 290 government soldiers lost their lives. The Viet Cong lost 628. During this period, while the number of Communist-instigated attacks and acts of terrorism was below the 1964 weekly averages, the size and violence of specific actions was stepped up considerably.

In the first two weeks of February, Saigon's forces lost a total of 1,312 weapons, while capturing 279 from the Viet Cong. Among the weapons taken from the Communists are increasing numbers of recent Soviet and Chinese make, suggesting that an effort is being made to standardize on these bloc models.

The weapons are going to arm an increasingly sophisticated, though still essentially guerrilla, army. At least 4,700 men were infiltrated into South Vietnam from the North in the first seven months of 1964, and in increasing measure these are native North Vietnamese, many of whom were drafted specifically for service in South Vietnam. US officials in South Vietnam now estimate the main force strength of the Viet Cong at 34,900, with some 60-80,000 irregulars in a backup role.

The government has 246,000 in its regular army and some 266,000 irregulars. A new recruiting program, instituted last summer, is beginning to yield results. One of the real drawbacks is a continued high rate of government desertions. Last year some 21,000 regulars deserted, the largest number in any single year.

In the field, the Viet Cong are getting bolder and more confident. They are showing an increased

willingness to engage government regulars over longer periods of time, more frequently, and in larger units.

So far in February, the Viet Cong, besides directing attacks against American personnel and installations, have dealt several punishing blows to the South Vietnamese. For example, a Communist force administered a series of defeats on government forces in Binh Dinh Province, which left government control limited to the immediate vicinity of the major population centers.

In the past few days, while there has been some slackening in the intensity of Viet Cong military attacks compared with the week of 7-13 February, it appears that the Communists are maintaining a relatively high level of terrorism and harassment. It is too early to determine whether there has been a change in the pattern of Viet Cong activity as a result of the air attacks on North Vietnam.

Viet Cong main forces in the northern part of South Vietnam were strongly reinforced last year and are considered the best they have. They have not yet been committed to their full military potential. Strong government and Communist forces are maneuvering against each other in Phuoc Tuy Province, east of Saigon. The two Viet Cong regiments, which inflicted heavy losses on the government at Binh Gia in early January, are still there.

50X1

50X1

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET